The Brass Necklace and Birth Control —By Winifred Duncan Ward

"THERE'S no use," said I to Henry, my husband; "the thing can't be got. I've been to ten jewelry stores; I've been to the upholstery department of eight Fifth Avenue shops. One would think that such a simple thing as a brass chain might exist in this annoying city."

"Why brass?" said Henry, yawning and unfolding the latest edition of the "Stock Broker's Friend." "Why not gold?"

"Because," said I, wearily, "that particular dress demands a brass necklace."

"Nonsense!" said Henry. "I suppose you know that the female you invited to lunch has been downstairs waiting for two hours."

Now, as a matter of fact, although she is one of my dearest friends, I had in the stress of shopping forgotten all about Loretta, and it was just like Henry to let her sit there. "Henry Dear," said I, in that icy tone peculiar to a wife and mother, "will you please cease calling her a 'female'?"

"Well, then, why does she act like one all the time?" said Henry, who needed his luncheon.

"Don't be a prude," said I, ringing for the footman, for the truth of the matter is that Loretta, who has taken up birth control as a lifework, causes Henry electric shocks whenever she opens her mouth, which she does continually.

It was just my luck that he should select this day to come home to lunch. However, there was nothing to do but see it through.

"My dear, what do you think?" said Loretta, lifting her pretty chin out of her furs, and pulling off the most immaculate of white kid gloves; "we're all going down to Washington next week to see the Senators."

The Senators— Dear Old Codgers

"Which Senators?" said Henry, coldly.

"All of them," replied Loretta, lighting a cigarette, "the dear old codgers. We're going to get them to change the Constitution."

"Blodgetts, serve lunch," said Henry, "and have the Rolls-Royce ready for me immediately after."

"Oh, Loretta!" I cried. "A new fad already? Why, you'd just got started on birth control and now you've switched off onto trying to re-form the Constitution"——

"Sh-h!" said Loretta, "my dear, don't say birth control."

"That's right, don't," said Henry, savagely. "I'm glad to see that you are getting a sense of modesty at last."

Loretta got out a tiny gold lorgnette and looked at Henry through it.

"Isn't he quaint?' she said, putting it away again. "I suppose the Senators are very much like him. That gives me an idea: I'll practice on him during lunch. You see, dear, we are forming a new group with a wonderful woman at our head, and from now on we have taken a new name—we are to be called the Voluntary Parenthood League."

Loretta paused, and powdered the end of her nose, looking so ineffably piquant and youthful that even I, who am in sympathy, burst out laughing. The worst of Loretta is that everything she becomes interested in always succeeds—Henry knows this as well as I, and hence his secret irritation at seeing her at play with the very foundations of life. With her unerring instinct for taking up causes that don't fail, no one could be sure that the world would not in the end be cursed with complete birth control, or anything else Loretta might think of in the mean time.

"I wonder," said I plaintively, and with the hope of changing the subject, "whether I could get that brass chain down in the Russian quarter, wherever that is."

"I've just come from there," said Loretta, nibbling an olive, "and do you know that statistics show that if the laws of birth control were in operation among the foreign element in New York City alone the municipal funds now directed into the twenty-five municipal hospitals for the care of the blind, the diseased and the feeble-minded children of this city would be sufficient to do away with the entire slum district and give each remaining child a liberal education?"

"Leaving ladies like you nothing whatever to talk about," said Henry, attacking the food.

"On the contrary," said Loretta, swiftly laying down the mouthful of chicken she had been about to put into her mouth—"on the contrary—having, in the course of two generations, practically done away with the unfit, and along with it that vicious circle of charity organizations which cater to overpopulation without taking any constructive steps to eliminate it—having, I say, freed the thousands of women now engaged in this futile occupation, we would be in a position"——

"I see," said Henry, turning to me, "that the steel strike is about to break"——

"Yes," said Loretta, "and it is the reasons for such national catastrophes that we women will then be in a position to point out to the great masses who will come to hear us lecture upon these matters."

"But, Loretta, dear," said I——

"And, moreover," said Loretta getting a large supply of chicken into the left cheek, "do you realize Senator"——

"What did you call me?" said Henry, looking like a startled fawn.

A Few Neat Statistics

"Do you realize, Senator," repeated Loretta, bent upon rehearsing her part, and leaning far over the table toward the helpless Henry, "do you realize that by putting into effect this simple law of controlling the number of children yearly brought into the world you would be saving, for yourself and your own family, thousands of dollars a year?"

"How so?" said Henry, pausing in the act of mastication.

"How so, indeed?" said Loretta, tossing back her curls and clenching her fist upon the tablecloth.

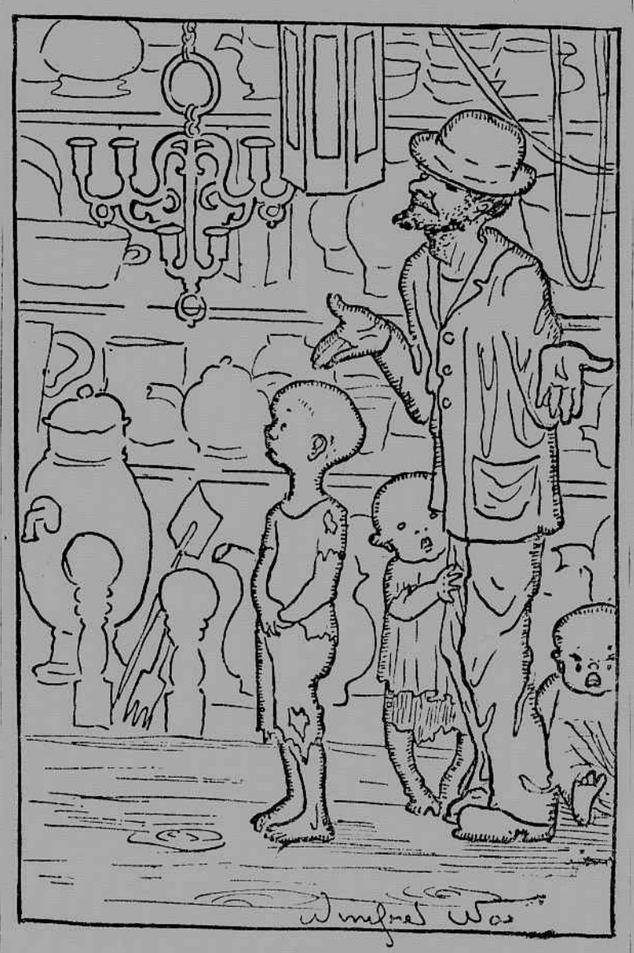
"Do you realize that five-tenths of the money you pay out in wages to the thousands of workers in your factories is money wasted? You think you are getting the maximum of labor out of those people. You are not, for underfed, devitalized, semi-crippled people are unable to contribute the maximum of labor. Do you realize that if one normal child had been born in place of every two abnormal children you would be getting from that one adult to-day the same amount of labor you are paying two adults to do now? Do you realize that the laborer with one child to support is five times less likely to go on strike than the laborer with five children to support?"

"Why?" said Henry.

"Because," said Loretta, in the hoarse but calm voice of one who has won her point and knows it, "because the laborer with five children has five children who are economically unfit—five children who should never have been born—five children who could no more grow up healthy and well fed on the wages their father can earn than the moon could reach the sun—children who"——

"Well," said Henry, beginning to eat again, "there's something in what you say; but I can't help it. What can I do?"

"Give us $5,000 for our campaign of education among the poor of this city," said Loretta, quietly swallowing the mouthful of chicken.



"It is the will of God, Lady"

"No," said Henry, with equal firmness. "Go around in your automobile and tell the workingmen to stop having so many children—it's perfectly simple, if you really want to do it—why do you need $5,000 to do that?"

"We need it for lunches and taxi fares down in Washington," said Loretta.

The Simplest Way Is Unconstitutional

"Now, that just shows," said Henry, waving his fat hand, "how impractical you women are. Instead of getting down to the meat of the thing as soon as you get an idea you want to go deviling the government about it. Go down into the slums and teach the men and women there how to stop having more children than they can support There is your field, young lady."

"Thank you for your kind suggestions, Senator," said Loretta.

"Don't call me Senator," said Henry, starting in a confused manner.

"But," continued Loretta, "is it possible that you do not know that the Constitution expressly forbids me to go down into the slums and give those poor people the information they should have?"

"Nonsense," said Henry, "no such thing."

"Yes," said Loretta, sadly, "thanks to your friend, Anthony Comstock, here is a whole clause in the Constitution making it a penal offence, punishable by imprisonment, to tell those poor, ignorant people how they can limit their families. Now do you see why we are going to Washington to get the Constitution changed?"

"You are not going to discuss birth control with our United States Senators, I trust," said Henry, now deeply shocked.

"We are going to discuss," said Loretta, coldly, "anything which will lead to the repeal of that law for the good of humanity."

There was a solemn silence, for Loretta has a way, in spite of her curls and tilted nose, of making you feel that you are vulgar if you don't agree with her.

Enter the Brass Necklace

"Henry," said I, filling in the breach with that tact peculiar, it is said, to a wife and mother, "Henry, I've simply got to go down to the Russian quarter after that necklace. You know the Bigelow-Breeze's reception is to-morrow and I won't have another chance—suppose we run along with you now in the car."

"Very well," said Henry, struggling into his fur coat. "Miss Loretta will excuse you, I'm sure."

"Oh, that's all right," said Loretta, "I'm coming with you. We have a meeting this afternoon of the Bowery branch of the Women's Auxiliary of the League for Voluntary"——

"Parenthood," said Henry, wearily.

And so we set out. The morning had been dull, and now a steady drizzle had set in, which seemed to grow duller and steadier as we left the shining asphalt and turned into the poorer districts of the city.

The chauffeur, who had never heard of the Russian quarter, and didn't like this excursion anyway, stopped continually to ask dripping policemen, who thought it was somewhere around Rivington Street.

This name sounded sinister to me—like a place where murders should be committed—and as we approached it my spirits sank lower and lower. The streets had contracted to narrow cracks—miles and miles of wash hung out of the tenement windows, flapping dirtily in the rain; over head the elevated trains passed with a deafening roar that died away only to begin again with terrifying regularity.

"Think of babies being born and brought up in this noise," cried I.

From the trestles of the elevated the rain sloped and dripped in concentrated rivers upon the masses of bareheaded people who surged below in a darkness which the storm made almost night. In the black, cavernous mouths of all the shops candles were guttering, and heaps of children crawled and swarmed in and out among the filth.

"My God, James," said Henry, "where are you taking us?"

"This is Second Avenue, below Rivington Street, sir," replied the disgusted James.

"I didn't know such holes existed," said Henry.

"Oh, this is nothing," said Loretta, cheerfully. "You know I often think," she added, "how nice it is that Clarence wasn't born down here."

"Loretta!" I cried in horror. "Clarence is our only child."

We finally found the brass shops, and getting out of the machine we approached the least dingy of them and entered. Everything brass that has ever been made was there, except a brass necklace; really, life was very discouraging.

Nine Dollars a Week for Nine

There was plenty else to look at, but buying was difficult because the sullen woman in charge did not seem to know the price of a single thing. Finally there shuffled in a sallow, unshaven man, full of smiles and explanations. The lady was only a neighbor, so she did not know the stock. She was so kind as to come in—his wife usually tended the shop, but she was sick.

"Why don't you run the shop yourself?" said Henry, in the tone of a health inspector.

There was not enough in it, it seemed. The man had to make much more; so he worked in a cigar factory.

"My oldest girl," said he, with an apologetic smile, "she work in a shirtwaist factory."

"How many children have you?" said I.

"We have seven," said the man, and he sighed.

"How much do you all make, together?" said Loretta, who had ceased to be talkative all of a sudden.

"Some week we make $8, some week $9," said the man.

"For nine people to live on?" said Henry, severely.

"Well, you see," said the man, "three of them growing boys—only seven, five, nine year old—they no need eat so much food."

"But," said Loretta, "tell the gentleman why you have so many children when it is so hard to bring them up."

"It is the will of God," said the man, rolling his eyes devoutly. "My wife, she go to the society for the baby welfare; she say she cannot have so many kids; we put two of them away soon."

"Where will you put them?" said I.

"Oh," said the man lightly, "that is easy. Jimmie, he has, wha' d'y call?—hip disease—the free hospital take him; and then there is Sonya—she silly in the head, she not quite right—so feebleminded home take her."

"And your poor wife," said I, full of sympathy—"she is sick, too. What's the matter?"

"Oh, she all right in day or so," said the man, with a great smile; "she just have twins—two little girl; one is dead already, but the other—it fine little baby."

We fled out of the shop and into the automobile, over which the rain still drizzled and the elevated roared like a great, relentless beast.

"Did you say you were going to a meeting or something?" said Henry to Loretta.

Loretta, who knew when to be silent, nodded her little head.

"Well, here," said Henry, sullenly, getting out his checkbook, "here's $5,000 to help your league out when it gets to Washington and you can make me a member of the d—d thing."

And I never got the brass necklace after all.

Free Education Outside the Schools

Discoveries Reported By LAURA GATES SYKORA

LAST winter I left an editorial position, happy to be able to devote all of my time to my home and my two little girls. There were many things I wanted to do for them and with them, but felt dreadfully hampered by a lack of funds. My first reaction from this feeling was when we went for afternoon walks through old New York, a trip free to all who have eyes to see. We lived in the old Greenwich Village section so that we had not far to go to see many old houses, homes at one time of the Dutch and the English. We enjoyed the finding of a quaint doorway and learned to distinguish between those of Dutch and of English origin.

To Be Had For the Taking

My four-year-old needed a good kindergarten or Montessori school and the companionship of other children and I needed time for writing. The schools within a convenient distance were all impossibly costly.

"Why don't you send her over to the Montessori school at the Greenwich House?" asked a friend. "The children there are not different from those in the public schools, and you will find the teacher in charge just the kind of woman you would like to have your little girl with."

The next day I visited the little school. The two rooms were large and airy with golden yellow curtains at the windows, growing plants, an old fashioned grand piano with an older fashioned log cabin quilt thrown over it—a room where children could be at home. And they seemed to be happy, busily polishing brass, feeding the fish and dusting the chairs. Some were spotless, others not quite so, but looked as though an attempt at cleanliness had been made.

My Jean became a pupil there and enjoyed every minute of her time. Moreover, I was never made to feel that I was accepting anything but what was my right. The whole spirit was democratic in the broad sense of the word.

One day when Bob and Jean and I were walking about an old Dutch house we had seen, it seemed to me that up at the Metropolitan Museum there must be examples of old English and Dutch furniture. So we decided to go there and play that we were furnishing one of the old houses. The children were delighted and we had a very pleasant afternoon roaming among the old furniture. The guards are, most of them, able to tell you about the things in their particular division.

The Sunday Story Lady

It was on this day I made the most wonderful of my discoveries of what New York is doing for the free education of its children.

"Are you looking for the Story Hour Class?" inquired a guard of me.

"The what?" I asked.

"Oh, I thought you might be looking for Miss Chandler," he replied. "She's the young lady who tells the Sunday story."

At this he directed me to the story telling lady. Miss Chandler is a charming young person with just enough of the child in her, combined with interest and enthusiasm to make her the one to fill her position. Every Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock she tells a story in the large lecture hall, founded upon some historical episode, and illustrated by stereopticon views of objects of art which relate to it. On Wednesday afternoon she has a class just for the children who come to the Sunday story, when she takes them around in a group to the objects in the museum which were shown on the screen the Sunday before. Both the story and the supplementary class are free to any one.

The following Sunday found me in the lecture hall with Jean and Barbara. The little auditorium was packed, many of the children were from the East Side public schools. Others very proper in their fur-trimmed coats were escorted by their mother or governess. All in all, a happy, interested crowd of youngsters.

Many mothers are there, some with their knitting, others with embroidery and still others, like myself, willing to learn with the children. One mother brings her two children from Yonkers, another all the way from Astoria.

Order is maintained in the auditorium by a group of regular attendants called monitors, and mighty good disciplinarians they are, suppressing any whispering or the eating of peanuts, sometimes smuggled in in spite of the ban against them.

Museum Games

Continually one is surprised at what these children know about the museum. Miss Chandler will say such a thing is in Gallery 30, "Robert, will you lead us there?" Without a moment's hesitation Robert leads the way, seldom making a mistake. Some times the children choose certain pictures which Miss Chandler tells them to find. Off they go decorously enough, and pretty soon Miss Chandler follows along to see if they have been able to place their picture. Once in a while some one gets lost, but not often.

King Lear, grief stricken at the heartlessness of his youngest daughter, rethes on the arm of his jester

From "King Lear" as put on at the Metropolitan Museum at Wednesday matinees by the children of the Sunday Story Class

Another time Miss Chandler will take the entire group to the different pictures which illustrated the Sunday's story. She tells them about the artist and why the picture is famous and why it is perhaps considered better than another by the same artist. It is surprising what is remembered about them and repeated when the children some other day play what they call the "Museum game." In this two leaders are appointed who choose sides. One side describes a picture or takes the pose of a picture and if the other side is unable to guess it they lose a member and the winning side scores one, but if they guess the picture but are unable to name the painter or sculptor they lose without losing a member. The one who gains the most members and points of course wins.

"Acting Out" The Stories

The game children most love, however, is that of acting out the stories. Each child is given a character, for instance in the story of "King Lear and His Daughters," which was one of the recent stories told, one child was King Lear, another his jester, and an elfish little jester she was, three other little girls took the parts of the three sisters, and the biggest girl and the littlest boy were respectively the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France.

In their own words they expressed the sentiments of the characters they were portraying, many of them remembering almost the exact wording of the story. They were not altogether unconscious, but enjoyed themselves with a serious intentness. Occasionally a suppressed giggle or a mischievous poke from the serious old King made one sure that there was nothing unchildlike in their enjoyment.

Drawings by Gertrude L. Richards

Cordelia pleads with her obdurate father and the jester looks on

My own children have profited immensely from the time we have spent at the museum. They are, or rather I should say the eight-year-old is, familiar with the names of most of the well known painters and sculptors and can give some examples of their work.

Free Swimming Lessons

During the summer I was very anxious for the children to learn to swim, so I took them, with fear and trembling, I must confess, to one of the public baths. The matrons were very nice and told me how often the water was changed, what mornings it was fresh and what days the instructress was there. I watched the children as they came in. A matron examines their bathing suits and their towels, and if they have forgotten soap back home they go. They bathe themselves and put on their suits and are again examined and they are not allowed to enter the pool if they cannot pass the inspection of another matron who stands by the door. So it is a spotless, wholesome looking lot of little girls who swarm into the pool for a merry half hour.

The instructress was an expert swimmer and did not spare herself in teaching all those who cared to learn.

These are the free things in New York that I have taken advantage of, but they do not begin to cover the long list that I have heard about but not patronized. This year, however, will see Bob taking music lessons at the Greenwich House Settlement. Lessons from a graduate of one of the foremost of European musical conservatories may be had for 25 cents apiece.

I wonder if there is any other place in the world where so much may be had as in New York by merely knowing about it and reaching out to take it?

The Americanization of Ameer

NOT long ago, on a quiet, comfortable farm in New England, lived a little ten-year-old Ameer, a handsome Persian boy, with big, brown, flashing eyes, black hair and a clear skin. During vacation he spent his days helping in the garden, caring for his chickens or often roving through the nearby woods, discovering new birds and flowers and making exciting additions to his various "collections." Evenings he liked to read or play his little brown violin, which came from "the other side."

A short time ago he came, with his parents and little brothers and sisters, to live on the East Side of New York. Immediately he was quite a hero among boys, for he could tell of wonderful animals, birds and flowers of which they had never heard.

However, it was not many weeks before his heroism vanished in their eyes because the boys found that Ameer did not know how to fight properly when a big fellow picked on him; he could not swear and talk back sufficiently to please them. He refused to go "crooking" with boys on his street who watched for smaller children returning from baker shops to snatch their buns and cakes from them. He was always beaten in all their gang games, and his mother was forever calling him to read, or practice on his violin.

No, Ameer was no longer a hero. He was called by that name which cuts deep into the heart of every boy—he was a "sissy."

Small wonder that when a visitor from the Charity Organization Society heard him speak harshly to his young sister, and asked if that was the language he always used Ameer's black eyes snapped and he replied: "Sure, whatya think? I gotta talk like that; I'm a tough guy now."

A challenge—that to the social worker! The society's representative pondered as to how she would meet this particular social maladjustment as presented in Ameer, and whether it was not a problem for the Americanization group to undertake.

Americanization too often is one of those idealistic general terms which we all greet with enthusiasm, and then let it go at that. The reason is simple. We just do not know how to reduce it to the concrete so it will tie up with our own individual efforts, and, anyway, we are not just sure whose job Americanization is. Broadly, it is the definite responsibility of every one of us who deals with these families. It means considering their past experiences and then trying to adjust them to their particular niche in our own country.

It is certainly a far cry from the open fields of Persia to an East Side tenement, and we have got to try to understand the background of Ameer's family, together with their ambitions and possibilities, before we decide on any definite plan, and that plan will have to be one in which they believe or we will fail.

Social work appears to some like a game of chess. You are the player and the families the chessmen. After due consideration of the trend of the game as a whole, and the advantage of a certain play, you make your next move, and so on until the end. The fallacy of the simile is this: the family must not only agree to the move, they must understand the mental processes which lead up to it, so that it will be just as much their move as yours, otherwise your efforts are in vain.

As for Ameer's family, the Charity Organization Society will probably try to send them back to a farm by early spring, where they will have the agricultural opportunity they really want and need.